

Dmitri Shostakovich – Concerto no.2 for cello and orchestra op.126

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Abstract: In *Concerto no. 2 for cello and orchestra*, the soloist is facing a very difficult page, high emphasizes all the resources of the instrument, especially when the violin is accompanied by an extensive orchestral ensemble. The score provides, through its structural unity, a wide range of symphonic and concerto elements, as well as content of the forms included in it. In *Concerto no. 2 for cello*, the development of the orchestral episodes, in contrast with the original theme, are strongly individualized and clearly distinguished from the dynamic point of view, but also in terms of character and instrumentation.

The *Concerto no.2 for cello and orchestra* has a tripartite structure and unfolds in an atypical succession of the traditional concerto genre: the first part *Largo*, the second part, *Allegretto* and the third, *Allegretto*.

Key words: *concertant, musical anagramme, musical cellules.*

1. Introduction and objectifs

Concert no.2 for cello and orchestra op.126 did not impose itself with the same force as the other concerts, perhaps because it does not constitute a score intended primarily for instrumental virtuosity. It is thought in tripartite form (like *Concerto no.2 for violin and orchestra*).

1.1. The first part of the concerto, *Largo* – in the form of a freely treated sonata

The first part, *Largo* (structured in the form of a freely treated sonata), opens with the low tone monologue of the cello taken over by the of the low pitch strings unison (measure 8). The orchestral colour is enriched with the contribution of the harp. The melodic line of the cello is built on jumps of chromatic intervals and a

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simple rhythm in 4/4. The extent of the concert's melodic line is 3 octaves and a half.

The chords accompany, discreetly, the cello. At measure 51 comes the horn that counterpoints the line of the solo cello's speech. The slight hue (*p*) in which the speech took place becomes more intense and the soloist intervenes with agreements in *forte* and *pizzicato*, expressive force taken over by the wood wind blowers (measure 64), in *fortissimo*.

The cello intones, in the *expressive piano*, a second musical idea, in double claw and chromatic gait, in the accompaniment of chords (measure 69). In the replica the horn enters, in *forte*, and the harp punctuates the harmony set for a while on Re major (measures 73-74). The atmosphere becomes less tense, becoming gradually more calm. In the foreground remains the solo cello whose speech combines the chromatic melodic line, arched downwards, on double notes. The horn intervenes in chromatic descending passages of eight note and the harp maintains the sound effects (octaves) on D major and eight note passages. The harmony converges towards D major, for a short distance (measure 99) and becoming fixe at (measure 103). From measure 110, reminding of the generic theme of *Concert no.1 for cello and orchestra*, at xylophone and the accompaniment of the harp and the cords pedal, wood wind blowers (clarinet, oboe, flute and piccolo) bring a different episode, in *piano* and *staccato*, in a different manner from the precedent serene, naive discourse. The cello, which held the pedal, is interpreting sixteenths figures on the *piano* and *pizzicato* accompaniment of the strings (violin 1,2 and viola - ternary measure). The alternative metre remains (3/2-4/4), the episode developing, at the clarinet and the low pitch cords, in the xylophone's and harp's punctuations and the thematic enunciations of the oboe, the flute and the piccolo flute. The melodic line of the cello is simple, intoned in the high pitch register in descendent chromatic pace. The walk on belongs to the clarinet and the low pitch cords. The rhapsodic form of the first part, atypical for part one (if we think of *Concert no.1 for the cello and orchestra*), maintains the intimate tone, interiorised and expressive.

A third episode (measure 132) is brought by the solo cello in sixteenth passages of *legato* and *staccato* in *piano* nuance, episode which will be taken over by the wood wind blowers.

The cello gives dynamic to the speech with the agreements, while the bassoon develops solo, in *forte*, a third musical idea which will be processed by the other wood wind instruments. The xylophone will punctuate, harmonically, alongside the blowers, the accompaniment. The idea of the third episode is processed by the cello. The harmonic punctuations alternate between the strings (*pizzicato*) and the blowers (*staccato*).

The theme of the musical idea is taken over alternatively by the strings (violins) and the low pitch strings (violas, cellos and double basses). At the blowers the harmonic punctuations on parties (*forte*, *staccato*): counter bassoon, bassoon, clarinet, alternate with the musical idea motives-clarinet, flute and piccolo. The xylophone doubles the strings line in counterpoint with the cello and the blowers. The horns, counter-bassoon and the bassoon bring back the second musical idea in parallel with the *development*, at the blowers (*in ff*), of the third episode idea (measures 169-174). The alternative measures come back (3/2-4/4). At the horn, counter-bassoon and the bassoon it is heard the generic theme intonation of the *Concert no1. for cello and orchestra*, in counterpoint with the second musical idea. The wood wind blowers take over in fortissimo this musical idea which will be abruptly interrupted by the hollow sound of the percussion (*cassa*).

The cello brings back the first musical idea in *pizzicato* agreements, on the percussion punches. The cello joins the bassoon and the counterbassoon, then the low pitch strings. The first musical idea is developed again by the solo of the cello (measure 203) accompanied by the harp's eight note. The strings punctuate the harmony in order to take over the theme in eight note passages. The intimate, in terrorised atmosphere from the beginning of the concert returns. The first part ends quietly in G major tonality.

The orchestration alternates between the support by the strings, then the bassoon and the counter -bassoon, of the solo cello. The harp contributes to the imitation of the discourse by the colour tone. The horn (*in sourdine*) ends the first's part discourse.

The harmony ambiance goes around the functional stability but the musical discourse brings a few moments (remembered) of functional remembrance. (D-A-G).

The next 2 parts are interpreted without interruption.

1.2. The second part - Allegretto

The second part, *Allegretto*, imposes the solo role of the cello which introduces a slight dance theme, in *staccato* and *piano*, in alternative measures. The jumps of intervals and the repeated notes of the cello are joined by the wood wind blowers (counter bass, oboe, flute). The main thematic reason is constituted gradually, by allusions of the serious strings (measures 27-28) and of the horn (measures 30-31), theme which will be taken over by the wood wind blowers. The second part constitutes, actually, a Scherzo with strange accents which become more and more aggressive. The thematic line of the cello imposes itself with tenacity, in *ff* and *staccato*, accents and interval jumps in *glissando*.

In invigorating the expression, the cello is increasingly tuning *glissando* (measures 40-80). The horn introduces (measure 85) the thematic motive that will be imposed as an emblem of this wild Scherzo. The thematic motif of the horn is interrupted by the agreement of the orchestral ensemble (F sharp-a-f sharp), in the alternative strokes of the timpani. The cello brings descending melodic arcs and figurations of eight notes. The strings (violins, violas) take over the development of the characteristic theme, in *staccato* eight note contretemps, with repetitive formulas. The cello faces the ample nuance and the expression accents of the orchestral theme and the sounds in *ff* of the xylophone, intoning ascending *glissandos* with accent, double notes (thirds), descending. The clarinet accompanies with *glissando* the cello (measure 132) in the dialogue continued by the bassoons (1,2,3 - measure 144) on the punctuated accompaniment of the strings. The augmented thematic line of the cello is accompanied by the difficult thematic passage of the bassoons. The tone becomes more and more aggressive. The musical idea is taken over by the wood wind blowers. The timpani pulsate the rhythm of the musical idea. To the wood wind blowers and the timpani, it is added the xylophone and the harp (with *glissando*).

The solo score processes the central idea, in double notes and *glissando*. The chords intervene, pointing to a variant of the melodic-rhythmic motif. In the instrumental playing of the cello (measure 201), the wood wind blowers and the chords intervene alternatively, either pointing to the musical idea or pointing to the chromatic harmony. The wood wind instruments will support, in the foreground, the theme, alternately, in contretemps with the solo cello (measure 229), on an agreement in the *fortissimo* of the orchestra (with xylophone and harp, timpani, horn, chords). The horn will take over the main idea of the second part, in *ff*, *staccato* and accents:



The strings punctuate in pizzicato, cluster agreements, unfolded. From the speech, the horn and solo cello detach, the timpani imposing the beat. The alternation in carrying out the central idea of the cello with the ensemble is also maintained at the highlight moment (measure 247) of the second part. In *ff*, divided the chords and the blowers bring, in full sound force, the central thematic idea:

Musical score for strings, measures 244-248. The score is written for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The music begins at measure 244. Measures 245-248 feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The instruction "div. arco" is written above the staves, and "ff" (fortissimo) is written below the staves. A rehearsal mark "64" is placed above the first measure of this system.

Musical score for strings, measures 249-253. The score is written for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The music begins at measure 249. Measures 250-253 feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The instruction "div. arco" is written above the staves, and "ff" (fortissimo) is written below the staves. A rehearsal mark "64" is placed above the first measure of this system.

Musical score for strings, measures 254-258. The score is written for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The music begins at measure 254. Measures 255-258 feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The instruction "unis." (unison) is written above the staves, and "mf" (mezzo-forte) is written below the staves. A rehearsal mark "64" is placed above the first measure of this system.

The thematic alternation is maintained between the instrumental parties, with the same dynamic force, the timpani becoming aggressive. The place of the solo cello is taken over by the horn solo that concludes the second part and also makes the connection with the third part:



1.3. The third part, *Allegretto* – in two sections

The third part, *Allegretto*, is directly affirmed by the horns and the *tremolo* of the drum. The discourse of the horns begins with the characteristic signal on the rhythm punctuated in the ternary meter:



The two horns develop a dynamic introduction, in imitative style, until the entrance of the solo cello (measure 33), which takes on the thematic motif.



The cello develops the cadence motif, accompanied by the *tremolo* of the drum. The solo score is very difficult, requesting the instrumentalist through octaves of sixteen notes, triples on double notes (quarters and quinces), trills. In the final part the cello score alternates the short melodic cantilenas with high virtuosity passages (with difficult fiddlestick technique).

The orchestra is treated until the highlight moment with economy of means: pedals at the strings and blowers from which the cello and the clarinet detach (measures 141-162) on the timpani strokes. The orchestra amplifies gradually and the clarinet role is taken over by the bassoon, counter-bassoon and the horns. The horns remind, through rhythmic diminution, the thematic motive. The low pitch

strings punctuate the rhythm and harmony in the pizzicato, insisting on E - B rapport (motif also found in bassoon).

The horns take over the theme (measure 179). Particular effects are found on percussion instruments (small drum, timpani, big drum). The solo cello develops the theme, in interval jumps (measure 190), in staccato. The thematic motifs alternate between cello and bassoon. The xylophone and harp are added. The discourse, enriched by the alternation of the instrument parties prepares a new cadence episode of the cello in the sounds of the percussion and the harmonic accompaniment of the chords. *The cadence* evolves after the exposure of the theme by the cello (measure 305) when the passages in double notes of the cello are accompanied by the small drum. After a thematic alternation between the solo cello and the strings, a new highlight moment is stated, in which the generic theme of the last part is brought back by the wood wind instrument and brass blowers on the accentuated strings agreements (measure 323).

The force is released in the entire orchestral assembly that takes over and develops the musical idea in the nuance of *fff* (measures 328-337), idea underlined by the xylophone, harp and timpani. After the break the cello states again the theme in *fortissimo*, in double passages accompanied by the strings.

The analogy with the last symphony of Shostakovich is obvious through the abundant involvement of the percussion alongside the solo discourse of the cello.

Another characteristic is the solo and thematic alternation of the blowing instruments in the confrontation with the solo instrument.

At the end of the final part the cello is accompanied by the divided double basses and cellos.

The strings and the harp accompany the solo cello in his final discourse until the last pages when the percussion instruments also intervene (tam-tam and legno). On D minor sound held by the cello, resonates the xylophone, the tam-tam, the legno, the drum and the double basses, the sounds gradually extinguishing.

This last part, episodically built, of an enigmatic but intense expression, highlights the emotional fanfare of the horns. The expression is accentuated by the lyric passages sustained by the wilful anachronism of the orchestral harmonies. Unexpectedly, at the highlight moment, the entire orchestra brings back, in a wild light and with a dynamic entrance, the theme of the second part *Scherzo*. Impressive is the final *diminuendo* that reminds us about the conclusion of the 15th Symphony.

The Concert no.2 for cello and orchestra cannot be structurally detached from the last symphony of the maestro. The solo score, very difficult, is perfectly integrated in the symphonic discourse of the assembly, the solo cello engaging in a dialog based on thematic motifs elements, with well individualised instruments

from the assembly. It can be appreciated that this concert continues the stylistic conception of the composer also from the simple fact that we meet again here the „monogram” motif, present in the previous concert works.

The cello concerts represent, for the musical literature dedicated to this instrument, a challenge both on the instrumental and the symphonic-concert fields. The first part of the *Concert no.1 for cello and orchestra* in E flat major develops based on the dialogue between the cello and the group of wood wind blower instruments.

The presence of the timpani is significant. The cyclical unity of the concert is based on the generic theme significant reality, built on a simple rhythm, marked by the *staccato* and *portato* technique, theme that we find again with the same rhythmic configuration but transposed in different modulating hypostasis (giving individuality to the instrumental colours of the symphonic assembly) in the first part, in the cadence that constitutes the third and the last section of the finale, *Allegro con brio*.

The distinct musical content of the two concerts is determined by their different structure: the first being quadripartite and the second tripartite. The first part of the *Concert no.1 for cello-Largo* is energised, the main theme coming back with obstinacy. In the first part of the *Concert no.2 for cello – Largo* brings a different theme in chromatic intervals and can be thought as a continuation of the main theme interrogation form the *Concert no.1 for cello* debut.

The strong dynamic contrasts underline the tragic and enigmatic expression. In *Concert no.2 for cello* the development of orchestral episodes, contrasting from the initial theme, are strongly individualised, clearly distinguished from the dynamic point of view but also of the character and the instrumentation.

Šostakovič introduces the harp, the celeste and the xylophone (as well as in the *Concert no.1 for violin and orchestra*).

The cyclic unity is determined by the presence of the thematic elements on the course of the musical material evolution along the sections. It is worth noting the fact that the high registers of the blowing instruments (oboe, clarinet, flute and piccolo flute) as well as the solo instrument, are required.

The elements with technical difficulty are not to be ignored either. The individualisation of the instrumental colours in the assembly is particularised in *Concert no.2 for cello and orchestra*.

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However, unlike the final of the other solo instrumental concerts of the composer, Concert no.2 for cello and orchestra proposes a temporal expansion with the discrete dynamic and the instrumentation (alongside the solo cello, the percussion instruments and the double bass are punctuating thematically). The cyclic unity is determined by the presence of the thematic elements on the course of the musical material evolution along the sections. It is worth noting the fact that the high registers of the blowing instruments (oboe, clarinet, flute, and piccolo flute) as well as the solo instrument, are required.

2. Final aspects

The concertos for cello are real challenges in the literature dedicated to this instrument, both from the solo instrument and from the symphonic point of view. The different musical content of the two concertos is also determined by their different structure: the first one has four parts, while the other has three. The first part of the Concerto no. 1 for Cello - Allegretto - is energetic, the main theme returning with obstination. The first part of the *Concerto no. 2 for cello* - Largo - brings a tragic theme at chromatic intervals, which can be interpreted as a continuation of the interrogation in the main theme from the beginning of the Concerto no. 1 for cello. The strong dynamic contrasts highlight the tragic and enigmatic expression. In *Concerto no. 2 for cello*, the development of the orchestral episodes, in contrast with the original theme, are strongly individualized and clearly distinguished from the dynamic point of view, but also in terms of character and instrumentation. Šostakovici introduces the harp, the celesta and the xylophone into the orchestra (as he has done in Concerto no. 1 for violin and orchestra). The cyclical unity is determined by the presence of the thematic elements during the development of the musical material within sections. It must be noted that the high registers of the wind instruments (oboe, clarinet, flute, piccolo flute) and of the solo instrument are used.

The elements of technical difficulty are also not to be ignored. The individualization of the instrumental timbres within the ensemble is put into practice in *Concerto no. 2 for cello and orchestra*. The direct transition from the second to the last part is reminiscent of the piano concertos. Unlike the end of the other solo instrument concertos, *Concerto no. 2 for cello and orchestra* proposes a temporal expansion through the discrete dynamics and the instrumentation

(alongside the contrabassoon, the percussion and the wind instruments create dialogues and mark the theme).

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